

# “Of Men, Women and Art”:\* Some Historical Reflections

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Two years of public activity on behalf of the Women’s Caucus for Art have persuaded me that, to paraphrase Shirley Chisholm, I suffer discrimination as much or more through my identification with the arts than through my identity as a woman. Last October, I had an encounter with the U.S. government which confirmed a growing suspicion that the problem for women in art lies not only in being female, but in the condition of art itself. Let me begin by describing that experience.

The occasion was a panel sponsored by the National Commission on the Observance of International Women’s Year, one of a series during which the Commission would hear of women’s problems in various fields. Diane Burko, Lila Katzen, June Wayne, and I were to testify on the visual arts that morning, to be followed by representatives of the performing arts in the afternoon. Considering the ceremonial significance of the hearings—a blue-ribbon committee under a Presidentially appointed commission had invited us to the State Department to tell them what should be done about women in art—the actual event seemed absurdly inconsequential. We gathered in a small room, committee members and panelists together around a long table, with a few guests in a line of chairs around the perimeter. Evidently, I thought, this was primarily for the record, as one could tell from the microphones on the table and the tape recording equipment visible on one side of the room. But as we warmed to our subjects, filling the air with statistics and points of view, suddenly we were told that the tape recorder was not working, and later, that it would not be working at all that day, since no one was on hand to repair it. A man in the room muttered audibly, “that wouldn’t be tolerated if this were a Congressional committee on the Hill!”

We resumed our perorations, following embarrassed as-

surances from kindly ladies that notes would be taken, drafts xeroxed, and recommendations carefully preserved. Yet I suspect that each of us there felt that the importance of our testimony had been subtly diminished. Clearly, what was occurring in Room 1205 of the State Department was small-scale and insignificant, hardly to be compared to whatever Henry Kissinger was doing upstairs, or wherever he was. But was this because the hearing involved women, or art? A glance at the sheet describing the overall committee structure showed the Arts and Humanities Committee to be strangely unique. It was the only committee of the ten to represent a specific profession, or collection of related professions. Others included Child Development, Homemakers, Women in Employment, Women in Power, Women with Special Problems. One was not certain whether to be disturbed or amused. We were neither in power nor employed, but at least we did not have special problems.

Or did we? Why indeed were the arts and humanities singled out as a category of special female concern, analogous to homemaking, if not for the obvious historical association between women and the arts? I had even alluded to this point unwittingly in my own testimony, explaining that since art has often been stigmatized as a womanly pursuit, men in the field have taken great care to preserve appropriately virile images for the roles of artist or art historian, and to ensure that the more prestigious work is done by males, lest the profession become female-dominated, and hence weak in image. Yet because at the time I was thinking more about women and less about art itself, it was only after the hearings that the more fundamental point became clear: that the status of art in our society closely parallels the status of women.

Like women, the arts are simultaneously cherished for

their purifying, uplifting value even as they are regarded as frivolous and a luxury in the larger social scheme. In the priority of values, the arts occupy both the lowest and highest positions—lowest when it comes to funding, highest when it comes to lip-service praise. But either way, they are not really central to the workings of society, and are typically thought of as one of its fringe amusements. Thus recently a state representative in Arizona, on filing a bill to abolish the Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities on the grounds that it is a “nonessential agency,” said, “culture is fine in a time when the state is in good financial condition, but when you try to pinch pennies, you have to cut the frills.”<sup>1</sup> (One wonders what she would think of Louis XIV bankrupting the French treasury to pay for Versailles.) Yet if the share of the Arizona budget given to the arts is anything like its national counterpart, the savings will be pitifully small. Throughout the IWY hearings we were reminded time and again how little of the federal budget goes to the arts. The 80 or so million dollars given annually to the National Endowment for the Arts represents something like a day’s worth of the annual defense budget. Since 1967 only 474 artists have received NEA grants. The United States spends 1/8 as much per capita on the arts as Great Britain, and 1/6 as much as West Germany.<sup>2</sup> We women had come to the government to demand a larger slice of a pie so small that its subdivision was scarcely worth bickering about.

Like women, viewed historically, the arts are poor, have no legitimate place of their own in society, and are dominated and overshadowed by the “necessary” masculine fields of economics, political science, the military, and business. They do not pay their way, do not produce income (though some murmur that the performing arts sometimes show a profit), and while no one ever asks whether the war machine pays for itself, the purposes of defense spending and international diplomacy being self-evident, national spending for the arts is perceived either as a dole or a tithe, but in any case, as an outlay for which no estimable return is expected. It comes under the heading of Charitable Contributions. One gives to the arts as one gives to the needy, or to the cancer fund. By some curious inversion of values, the areas of endeavor which are linked with our loftiest or most humanitarian values are carried on through charity and volunteer work. The things that we theoretically hold most dear do not warrant federal support.

This seeming paradox is best understood through the analogy of the double standard of value typically applied to women. The connection between art and women is intricate. On the one hand, they share a similar fringe status in relation to society as a whole; yet on the other hand, art and femininity have been intimately linked in other ways, at least in modern history. June Wayne’s incisive analysis of a closely related subject, the power interaction between the modern artist and his or her patrons, critics, and dealers in terms of stereotypical male and female roles<sup>3</sup> brilliantly illuminated a murky area and her insights have found broad application. I would like to take her concept one step further, and to show that it can be applied not only to the artist but to art itself, and to develop the historical picture in support of this point.

The image of art outside the arts has changed considerably from age to age, and a short essay is no place to outline its history. Yet it is appropriate to take as a point of departure

the founding of the American nation, when circumstances led to a self-conscious redefinition of the proper role of art in a democratic society. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, in his oration delivered at the dedication of the Pennsylvania Academy in 1807, expressed the view that art was indispensable to the functioning of a democracy, providing healthful recreation, a means to elevate public taste, and political luster for the nation.<sup>4</sup> His implicit assumption that art had a certain inherent power beneficial to the strength of the country proved to be a relic, increasingly old-fashioned, of earlier European attitudes, for there was from the beginning of the nation a more widespread opinion that the arts were a luxury. Benjamin Franklin regarded them as “necessary and proper gratifications of a refined society,” but urged postponing their encouragement until such tastes could be satisfied by a stronger national economy.<sup>5</sup> This point of view is echoed in the celebrated remark of John Adams:

I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain.<sup>6</sup>

Writing in 1824, the historian Jared Sparks gave Adams’ view a different emphasis: “When we grow older, and have more leisure, more wants and more wealth, we can afford to indulge in luxuries,” and “the American soil . . . [will] be found not less fertile in the products of fancy and taste than it now is in the fruits of practical invention and wise maxims of political science.”<sup>7</sup> Now that “fancy and taste” have been pitted against practicality and wisdom, the cultivation of art is no longer a matter of delayed gratification, of saving the best for last, but of taking care of important matters first, and leaving capricious and impractical pursuits to come as afterthoughts. Value distinctions have set in, with the arts acquiring attributes characteristically assigned to the female sex. The distinction between usefulness and luxury can, of course, be traced to Puritan roots (as in the often-quoted “The Plowman that raiseth Grain is more serviceable to Mankind than the Painter who draws only to please the Eye”). Yet the history of attitudes toward women also offers parallels too striking to dismiss. One argument often expressed, that art weakened the moral fiber of the nation, was stated in terms oddly analogous to a preacher’s warning of the seductive nature of women. Mark Hopkins’ opinion of the arts, for instance, as stated by a reviewer of *The Connexion Between Taste and Morals*, was that the fine arts were immoral “because they often pander directly to vice, because the pleasures received from them . . . are of a sensuous character . . . and because they have flourished among corrupt and degraded nations.”<sup>8</sup>

Just as women in the 19th century were perceived as coming in two varieties, seductive and virtuous, the femme fatale and the Good Woman,<sup>9</sup> so the view of art as corruptive was rejected by those who saw exactly the opposite properties. Far from seducing men away from their sterner purposes, art could improve the mind and soul, provide agreeable and welcome distraction from material pressures, and heighten

one's virtue and morality. Exactly like a good wife. As the "nationalist apologia" was formulated in the early 19th century, the characteristics ascribed to art often seemed identical to those ascribed to women. The arts provided "rational enjoyment" for wealthy men who might otherwise succumb to gambling, or other base temptations. According to De Witt Clinton, the "cultivation of the liberal arts will not allow men to relapse into ferocity." William Tudor, prominent Bostonian, extended the argument to the national level, claiming that the tendency of the arts is to "purify, adorn and elevate every country where they are cherished."<sup>10</sup>

Matthew Arnold, though not American, must be mentioned, for in his classic beleaguered defense of the arts in an age of growing materialism and scientific positivism, he assigns to art another attribute related to man's relationship with woman—its "undeniable power of engaging the emotions."<sup>11</sup> Unlike John Adams, who saw art's appeal to the emotions as a pre-Enlightenment vestige of superstition and despotism,<sup>12</sup> and also unlike the do-gooder claims of the American nationalists for art's self-improving benefits, Arnold rejects for one brief moment the false dichotomy between art as temptress and as domestic helpmate, seeing it, as he would say elsewhere, "steadily and whole," as an authentically powerful, authentically good force which renders strong men stronger (as opposed to strong men weaker or weak men stronger) by helping to connect their thought with their feeling. Yet even Arnold, in his efforts to counter T. H. Huxley's claim for the superior value of science in education, is forced to acknowledge "the reproach which is often brought against the study of *belles lettres* . . . : that the study is an elegant one, but slight and ineffectual, a smattering of Greek and Latin and other ornamental things, of little use for anyone whose object is to get at truth and to be a practical man."<sup>13</sup> Though Arnold goes on to resist this reproach, the adjectives go unchallenged, and we are left with the same lingering ties between art and femininity—"elegant," "slight and ineffectual," and "ornamental."

In his parenthetical admission of the impracticality of the arts and letters, Arnold notes the modern value accorded to work and trade, especially in the United States, where he observes, quoting Emerson, "the modern majesty consists in work."<sup>14</sup> To the degree that business and science shared the popular characterization as practical, productive, and essential to the progress of society, they could be seen interchangeably as the masculine counterparts of impractical, ornamental, feminine art. (One wonders what Arnold and Huxley might have thought to see science itself join the *belles lettres* in the 1970s, shrinking in the eyes of both government contractors and prospective students as it declines in immediate practical usefulness.) As the work ethic rose in the 19th century to provide the primary measure of achievement, the arts themselves slipped deeper and deeper into the feminized role, and *horribile dictu*, women themselves increasingly took up the arts. The dangers for young men of too much interest in the arts are perfectly illustrated in Charles Butler's moral instruction book for young men, written in 1836. In a section proclaiming the virtues of "Solid Accomplishment," he sets the following direct advice in a dialogue: "Ornamental education, or an attention to the graces, has a connexion with effeminacy. In acquiring the gentleman, I would not lose the spirit of a man."<sup>15</sup>

The connection between art and "ornamental education"

was confirmed by James Jackson Jarves. In the *Art Idea*, offering a characterization of art, he proposes it as a "counter-weight or balance" to science.

Art adorns science. Science is the helpmeet of art . . . Art [is] the ornamental side of life, as Science is its useful . . . We build, manufacture, classify, investigate and theorize under [Science] . . . But our pleasure is more intimately related to art as the producer of what delights the eye and ear and administers to sensuous enjoyment.<sup>16</sup>

Jarves does not here link these distinctions with sexual stereotypes, yet notice how in a different context he uses the rational-emotional polarity to explain the efflorescence of women sculptors and to reveal an association between men, reason, and science, and between women, feeling, and art. In an 1871 review of American sculpture in Europe, he observes that "few, if any, American women have won a reputation in painting, [though] several have acquired some distinction in sculpture," and suggests as a possible reason that "modern painting is essentially scientific in its system of instruction. It requires much mental and manual toil," and since:

few women as yet are predisposed to intellectual pursuits . . . naturally they turn to those fields of Art which may seem to yield the quickest returns for the least expenditure of mental capital. Having in general a nice feeling for form, quick perceptions, and a mobile fancy, with, not infrequently, a lively imagination, it is not strange that modelling clay is tempting to their fair fingers.<sup>17</sup>

When later in the same passage Jarves praises the works of Harriet Hosmer as having a "robust, masculine character, even in details, as if wrought out by hard headwork and diligent study of models by a mind that had forced itself, as with a manly energy, to achieve a mechanical mastery of a profession for which it has no supreme aesthetic predilection," he is simultaneously able to declare Hosmer an exception to her sex, and art itself as masculine, in its more cerebral aspects. How this is to be reconciled with his earlier definition of art as sensuous, pleasurable, and non-intellectual is not entirely clear. The discrepancy can, in fact, only be understood as a consequence of the gymnastic efforts of the art-identified 19th-century male to preserve an image of virility for his field, in the face of the threat posed by the increasing presence of women in that field.

Another tactic employed by the male artist seeking to escape the stigma of feminization was to separate the arts into high and low, the fine arts versus the crafts, and to claim for himself the higher reaches, which were asserted to be beyond the scope of the female mind. The clearest instance of this approach is seen in an anonymous author's claim in *The Crayon*, of February, 1860, that women might be educated in the arts they were best suited for—painting porcelains and ivory, making jewelry or "simple ornament," for:

where shall we find, except among women, the patience and carefulness required in the coloring of botanical plates and every description of illustrative art? . . . man is not made for a sedentary life; woman, on the other hand, conforms to it without inconvenience . . . It is only in *womanizing* [italics his] himself, in some degree, that man succeeds in obtaining the development of these faculties so contrary to his physical constitution, and always at the expense of his natural force.<sup>18</sup>

Now art is virilized by characterization as a profession best practiced by physically energetic people, creatively impatient with mere detail, concerned only with the grander concepts.

But there was another trap concealed down this avenue of escape for male artists on the run, for the more they claimed the higher, nobler ground of art for themselves, leaving the menial crafts for female execution, the wider they were making the separation between art (at least the better part of it) and the practical mainstream of life.<sup>19</sup> Once the first cries of art-for-art's-sake were heard, and images associated with aestheticism had acquired a distinctly feminine character, whether in the exquisitely delicate nocturnes of Whistler, the rapid ethereal beauties of Dewing, or in the pastel hues of the American Impressionists – not to mention the outrageous dandyism of Whistler or Wilde – it had become clear that the public image of art itself, always precarious, was now in great danger. This background, overdrawn as it is, helps explain the extraordinary insistence of Ash Can School painters upon life and virility (Henri's notions about Brotherhood through art), crudeness of technique (Luks' boast of painting with a shoestring dipped in pitch and lard), and the deliberate choice of such thoroughly masculine subjects as boxing and wrestling, as a kind of rescue operation for art's image. Even their critics seemed relieved. A New York *Sun* reviewer of a George Bellows exhibition in 1909 observed:

his boxing pictures . . . call them brutal if you will, they hit you between the eyes with a vigor that few living artists known to us can command. Take any of these Parisian chaps, beginning with Henri Matisse, who make a specialty of movement – well, their work is ladylike in comparison with the red blood of Bellows.<sup>20</sup>

Even allowing the importance of Teddy Roosevelt as a virility exemplum, the artists of the Henri circle pressed their case rather hard, putting as much distance as possible between themselves and Whistler (whom they parodied in mock theatrical productions), and insisting upon restoring the good (virile) name of art itself. Put in modern terms, it amounted to a macho takeover of the art world. The irrational superiority accorded to "toughness" and "vigor" in American painting could be exemplified throughout the 20th century, but it may suffice to cite one example of the ever-present danger of femininity for the male artist. Paul Rosenfield wrote of Charles Demuth in 1921:

Always, his work has airiness, daintiness, charm. Only the artist appears to be a trifle too much the gentlemanly Johnny of his profession . . . There is always the suspicion of an almost feminine refinement in his work.<sup>21</sup>

Inasmuch as the reviewer's opinion of Demuth is likely to have been colored by the knowledge that Demuth was homosexual, we may as well face this notorious "problem" for the arts head-on. It seems to be commonly understood that all of the covert warning signals that society regularly sends to young men who express an interest in the arts originate in the danger that he is joining a profession associated in the popular imagination with homosexuals. Yet it is questionable whether there are, in fact, more homosexuals in the arts than in other fields, or whether they are not simply more visible in the arts, flamboyant or outrageously anti-social behavior having been historically more highly tolerated by society in the arts than in other fields, since art is, as we have seen, perceived as a less socially normal, less serious pursuit. The

latent danger for men entering the arts is not so much that they will be thought to be gay as that art itself is thought to be gay.<sup>22</sup> The arts are not perceived as feminine because many artists are homosexual, but rather because the arts are so deeply associated for many other reasons with female stereotypes, reflecting values and images that attract some male homosexuals, even as they also attract non-homosexual males who do not find these associations threatening, and repel males who resist being linked with femininity. Men can more easily protect their personal image as straight than they can defend the virility of the entire profession. The problem, such as it is, does not involve the association between homosexuals and art, but the association between each of those with women, and the consequent demeaning of each as a factor of the historical second-class status of women.

Men, then, are historically justified in their concern that the arts are regarded as female. The connection is both *symbolic* and *functional*. It is symbolic in that the very qualities and attributes of the arts are analogous, in stereotype, to female qualities. In this sense it is not surprising that the personification of painting is female, the muses are female, and the whole network of allegorical pairs finds art, peace, and culture pitted against war, industry, and commerce. Indeed, in an excessive moment, Emerson even asserted that women are art.<sup>23</sup> The association between women and art is functional in that women, having had far more leisure time than men under social structures normal until the present, have virtually cornered the market of art activity, if we discount the status of that activity and measure only time spent at it. Women presently make up a majority in most art schools, a trend initiated in the later 19th century; have played a significant role as patrons of the arts; and fill nearly all of the army of volunteers who offer their services to the museums. If we now look briefly at the latter two areas, the picture will be rounded out.

Even as one states that women have been important patrons of the arts, it becomes obvious that modification is necessary. For one Isabella d'Este, there were handfuls of Alfonso d'Estes, Federigo da Montefeltros, and Medicis. For a few Mme. de Pompadours, du Barrys, or Marie Antoinettes, there were far more Crozats, Algarottis, or Louis XVI's. For every Gertrude Stein, a Leo Stein. Even when the female was the influence behind the patronage, as in the case of Louise Elder Havemeyer, it was the husband who actually paid and had his name recognized. Why, then, do we mindlessly repeat, "women have been important as patrons of the arts"? Can it be that they stand out distortedly because patronage itself is (despite its etymology), in the stereotypical view, feminine and not masculine?

In rearranging the actors of the art milieu along sex lines, June Wayne pits against the artist, who is passive and female, an entire cluster defined as aggressive, manipulating, and male: dealers, collectors, curators, patrons, critics, et cetera. Yet perhaps some distinctions are in order, because while money is manifestly the *sine qua non* of patronage, those who commission, purchase, or otherwise deal in art do not all have the same relationship to money. It has been generally true since the 18th century that patronage of art has borne a parasitic relationship to a society's basic economic system, in that money spent on the commissioning or purchasing of art was not working capital, but what might be called "loose money," diverted or leftover from the cycle of

making, investing, and spending. Certainly this has been the case in the United States, whether one thinks of private patrons such as Robert Gilmore or Thomas Handasyd Perkins in the 19th century, or John Quinn or Peggy Guggenheim in the 20th. Money given to supporting art is not funneled through ordinary social channels, and thus does not figure directly in the economy. In this sense, art patronage bears more a symbolic than functional relationship to women, in playing a female role in the larger economic family.

Art as investment is, of course, drawn into a working relationship with the economy, since there are real profits as well as immense tax advantages for the high-powered collector/investor. Yet when paintings and sculptures are treated as just another commodity, like grain or tin, we are really not talking about art as a creative enterprise, but as free enterprise, marketable under the rules of demand created by diminishing supply. The art dealt with is not drawn from the outset into an organic relationship with society, as Arts-and-Crafts Movement or Bauhaus theorists envisioned, but is instead haggled over like a corpse, the artist ignored until the creation is "dead," or more literally, the creation ignored until the artist is dead, at which time, under present tax laws, the work in the studio is transformed from materials into a commodity with a price tag. In a perverse way, art becomes stereotypically virilized through this form of association with money, even as a man's sense of masculinity may be shored up by a prostitute. Deliberate flouting of conventional morality has an ancient association with virility—one recalls the machismo of badmen from the Old West to the Mafia—and in a context such as modern finance, where operations are conducted with a wink at ethics or morals, and pieties are out of place, the takeover of cultural objects which trail associations with virtue acquires a peculiar quality, not of femininity, but of hyper-virility. Almost like seducing a nun.

If art investors are, then, masculine in these terms, and patrons are feminine, what of the museums, institutions which exist in this country primarily as a consequence of high-powered marketplace art acquisition mixed with leisurely building of personal collections, to result in monuments to rich people's hobbies? Isabella Stewart Gardner had engraved on her palace in Fenway Park, "*C'est mon plaisir*," a motto which effectively symbolizes both the spirit in which major American art collections were formed, and the spirit in which the museums that house them are typically approached. Only for scholars and art students is museum-visiting an engagement in work. For everyone else, tourists, tired executives, and the like, it is strictly a leisure pursuit. And not only is museum-going a peripheral, not functional, part of these people's lives, but only a small segment of the total population appears to regard going to look at art as a significant part of their lives—according to a 1974 Associated Councils of the Arts report, it is something like 4%.<sup>24</sup> Art involvement, as expressed through museum-going, can fairly be defined as "ornamental" in comparison to most people's serious, work/life pursuits, and it is not even necessary to mention the poor showing that art would make when compared to other leisure pursuits like professional sports and television.

Yet advocates of the American museum have seen it as playing an important social role through education. The charters of the Metropolitan Museum and the Boston Museum, both founded in 1870, each state that one of the

museum's purposes is to furnish instruction in the fine arts.<sup>25</sup> This purpose was fulfilled in a fairly modest way, chiefly through practicing art schools, before the recent growth of museum education departments and programs. But the emphasis on education has increased so rapidly that most of the nation's museum directors now consider, according to a 1974 survey, "providing educational experiences for the public" to be a museum's most important function, with conservation and preservation of works of art following as a poor third.<sup>26</sup> This attitude is not merely a modern aberration from what one would expect directors to regard as a museum's basic function, but seems to be rooted in 19th-century ideas. First, education programs seem to positively reinforce the lingering concept that art-is-good-for-you (instilling virtue, improving morals, and adding to the general good). The tenacity of this idea is shown in contemporary rhetoric. George Heard Hamilton asks, "is it not the fundamental moral imperative basic to the development of museums in the 19th and 20th centuries, that they have an essentially educational function to perform in a modern democratic society?"<sup>27</sup> Thus the museum acquires utilitarian justification, even as it assumes a more active social role, and it becomes in a sense defeminized as a result. Yet from society's viewpoint, the virilization is illusory. Museum education is relatively harmless, since it is not "real" education at all, not being of the schools and universities and having no formal program. Such "education" has at best an adjunct relation to other forms of study; it is ornamental rather than fundamental, in the same sense that 19th-century writers saw all of art. That museum education is carried on more by women than men in America, and to an incredible extent by non-paid volunteers,<sup>28</sup> follows as much from the limited importance that society assigns such work as from the traditional concept of both art and education as female preserves.

Museums will continue to play the stereotypical role of female in American society as long as they continue to depend so heavily on private funding. According to the 1974 National Endowment for the Arts survey, art museums produce only 42% of their total income from their own revenues; the rest comes from private and government support. Seventy-nine percent of the revenue of art museums comes from the private sector, with private donations making up 32% of that figure. In both cases, the percentage of private support is higher in art museums than in other types of museums.<sup>29</sup> Some of the consequences of this financial picture are familiar. The museum director has been obliged to play a supplicant role with prospective donors, compromising at every turn for the sake of obtaining the hoped-for gift—familiar stratagems to the female who depends upon the moneyed male for her livelihood. As former National Gallery Director John Walker cheerfully described in his autobiography, using Other People's Money to indulge one's private tastes can be a great deal of fun,<sup>30</sup> but, like wives and mistresses, one is always dependent upon and plays to the caprices of the Man.

Now that the great collections have long been acquired, mainstay support for museums continues to be provided by the wealthier upper classes, through donations, service on Boards of Trustees, local Arts Committees, and as volunteer docents. For obvious reasons, this visible, personal support is largely offered by women, who on these social levels have more free time. Perhaps the most surprising statistic to be discovered in the NEA survey is that two-thirds of the total

number of employees in American art museums are unpaid volunteers.<sup>31</sup> It need hardly be emphasized that an overwhelming majority of these volunteers are women. We may draw predictable inferences from this information about the traditional value of women's work as nil, financially. Yet we must not ignore the equally clear indication of the degraded status of art in American society.

But if all this is so, then what? Does the solution lie in increased federal funding for the arts? Certainly it is tempting to suggest this, particularly so that museums might pay for the work they are getting from volunteers. Yet there is always a question of constraints accompanying government intervention, and artists reasonably wonder whether they really want federal controls and surveillance, or whether, as June Wayne said at the IWY hearing, they aren't better off as "free-wheeling monkeys." And a larger arts budget for the sake of more of the same will not automatically change the public estimation of art's value. We do not need more art; what is needed is that art itself become more important in our national life—but not as entertainment, ornament, or frill. Perhaps we could even settle for Jarves' notion of the counterweight or balance to science and industry, if art were assured of equal footing. Yet we sorely lack non-sexist metaphors to express such a relationship.

I do not presume to offer a new utopian scheme for the proper relation between art and society, much less to blueprint the escape of art from the specific dilemma I have described. It simply has seemed worth pointing out that art has suffered from its association with stereotypical femininity, just as women have suffered from the same identification. Women, however, have begun to detach themselves from their crippling, limiting image, and are beginning to acquire a new image as well as a more equal position in society. As women artists become more prominent, they present paradoxically, a less feminized image for the profession than men, because becoming a serious artist is for a woman (with her housewife/amateur trappings) a step *into* professionalism rather than out of it. Further, a look at the successful tactics of the feminist movement, while not providing a solution for art, may yet give an intimation of how its lost territory might be reclaimed. Basic questions might be asked, such as whether art *should* be on the dole, or whether it does not have a rightful, natural place in a free society. Yet even if no conscious effort is made, perhaps there is still reason for optimism. If the status of art is in some historical and inescapable way bound up with the status of women, then it may fairly be expected that art's fortunes, like women's, will be improving. ■

\* I should acknowledge my quotation of Linda Nochlin Pommer's title for her 1976 CAA convocation address. It is too good to be used only once.

<sup>1</sup> Reported in *Art Workers' News*, March, 1976, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> These statistics were provided by several speakers at the State Department hearings. See also *Artists Equity Association National Newsletter*, Fall, 1975, pp. 4-5, in which is reported similar testimony given to a Senate subcommittee in July, 1975.

<sup>3</sup> June Wayne, "The Male Artist as Stereotypical Female," *Art Journal*, Summer, 1973, pp. 414-16.

<sup>4</sup> See Joshua C. Taylor, "The Art Museum in the United States," in Sherman E. Lee (ed.), *On Understanding Art Museums*, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1975, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860*, Chicago, 1966, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> John Adams, *Letters Addressed to His Wife*, edited by Charles F. Adams, Boston, 1861, pp. 67-68.

<sup>7</sup> Sparks' review of C. J. Ingersoll's *Discourse Concerning the Importance of America on the Mind* appeared in *North American Review*, XVIII, January, 1824, p. 162, and is cited by Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, *ibid.*, p. 236. The review appeared in *North American Review*, LIV, January, 1842, p. 232-33.

<sup>9</sup> On this concept now familiar in feminist literature, see: H. R. Hays, *The Dangerous Sex: the Myth of Feminine Evil*, New York, 1964; Katherine M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature*, Seattle, 1966, chapter VI; and Martha Kingsbury, "The Femme Fatale and her Sisters," in *Woman as Sex Object*, ed. by Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin, New York, 1972.

<sup>10</sup> Clinton's address to the American Academy of 1816 and Tudor's essays of the same period are cited by Miller, p. 12 and 21-22. Her chapter on "The Nationalist Apologia" is an invaluable source for American attitudes toward the arts in the 19th century.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Arnold, "Literature and Science" (an essay prepared for his American lecture tour of 1883), in G. B. Harrison (ed.), *Major British Writers*, vol. II, New York, 1954, p. 490.

<sup>12</sup> See Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 484, quoting Emerson's essay "Literary Ethics."

<sup>15</sup> Charles Butler, *The American Gentleman*, Philadelphia, 1836, p. 116. The advice is repeated in the summary, p. 287. I am grateful to Josephine Withers for calling my attention to this source.

<sup>16</sup> James Jackson Jarves, *The Art Idea: Sculpture, Painting and Architecture in America*, New York, 1865, pp. 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> J. J. Jarves, "Progress of American Sculpture in Europe," *Art Journal*, n. s. 33, 1871, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *The Crayon*, February, 1860, vol. VIII, part II, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> The widening gap between the fine and the useful arts was, of course, a matter of growing concern to many 19th-century writers, not the least of whom were Ruskin, Greenough, and Emerson. Emerson's somewhat less familiar opinion may be quoted to stand for the rest: "Art makes the same effort which a sensual prosperity makes, namely, to detach the beautiful from the useful . . . [but] this division of beauty from use, the laws of nature do not permit . . . Beauty must come back to the useful arts, and the distinction between the fine and the useful arts forgotten." ("Art," in *Essays*, London, 1853, pp. 190-91).

<sup>20</sup> *New York Sun*, 1909, quoted in C. H. Morgan, *George Bellows*, New York, 1965, p. 104.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted by Henry McBride, foreword to *Charles Demuth Memorial Exhibition* catalogue, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1937-38.

<sup>22</sup> I use the word deliberately for its feminine connotations. While it is not clear exactly when "gay" entered our language as slang for homosexual (the Oxford English Dictionary does not admit the definition), it is telling that all 19th- and 20th-century synonyms for "gay" pertain to the world of women—chic, charming, whorish, etc. The homosexual application may have originated in a mid-19th-century usage, "leading an immoral life," as in prostitution.

<sup>23</sup> "The felicities of design in art, or in works of nature, are shadows or forerunners of that beauty which reaches its perfection in the human form . . . All men are its lovers . . . It reaches its height in woman. 'To Eve,' say the Mahometans, 'God gave two thirds of all beauty.'" (*Culture, Behaviour, Beauty*, Boston, 1876, p. 97).

<sup>24</sup> The study, *Americans and the Arts* (reported by Charles Parkhurst in Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 93) discloses that 48% of the adult public has gone at least once to a museum; of that group, 30% were moderate or frequent attenders. Yet the survey covers all museums, and only 25% of the public surveyed preferred art museums to other kinds. Thus I obtain the figure of about 4% who regularly go to art museums.

<sup>25</sup> Related by George Heard Hamilton in Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>26</sup> *Museums USA: A Survey Report*, The National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C., 1975, table 9, p. 23. "Providing aesthetic experiences" rated second most important.

<sup>27</sup> Hamilton, in Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> See *Museums USA*, table 146, p. 289. While the overall male-female ratio for art museums is 60% male to 40% female, in education departments it is 44% male to 56% female. The non-professional education department ratio is 14% male to 86% female.

<sup>29</sup> *Museums USA*, table 202, p. 412.

<sup>30</sup> John Walker, *Self-Portrait with Donors*, Boston, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> *Museums USA*, pp. 184, 277 and 282. In 1971-72, the base year for the study, there were 35,600 art museum employees, of which 11,700 were paid, and 23,900 were unpaid volunteers.

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